Spotlight on transformation

A Developmental Services Bulletin from the Ministry of Community and Social Services

Inclusion in Action

This issue of Spotlight is dedicated to inclusion. We share stories of how people with developmental disabilities are being included in communities across Ontario.

Inclusion drives the work of this ministry. Including adults with a developmental disability in Ontario communities is so important that inclusion is in the name of Ontario's new developmental services legislation: Services and Supports to Promote the Social Inclusion of Persons with Developmental Disabilities Act, 2008.

Stories of Inclusion

Inclusion has many meanings, and it motivates much government work. It is at the heart of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, provincial diversity programs and Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy. When we include people of all abilities and backgrounds in the lives of our communities, everyone benefits and Ontario becomes stronger.

For some people with a developmental disability, inclusion can mean belonging to a local club in their community. For others, it can mean working at a job in their neighbourhood. Some people think inclusion simply means being treated like everyone else, with the same opportunities to socialize, contribute and participate in events and community life.

Below are stories of inclusion in action throughout Ontario. We begin with an Ontario-based program and a Canada-wide strategy for promoting inclusion. Read on to get some ideas on how you can make your community more inclusive of people with a developmental disability.

Ontario's Vision for Developmental Services

"To support people to live as independently as possible in the community and to support the full inclusion of Ontarians with disabilities in all aspects of society."

Inclusion Projects

Teaching Youth about Inclusion: Ontario's Community Inclusion Project

Ontario's Community Inclusion Project aims to make inclusion a way of life in communities across the province.

Last February, it partnered with Toronto's Youth Action Network to host a three-day conference. Close to 100 young people from across Ontario, with and without developmental disabilities, came together to talk about the issue of inclusion. They also attended workshops on developing communication skills and being an inclusion leader.

Participants said the biggest impact was hearing from their peers with developmental disabilities about their school experience. Many youth at the forum did not realize that their peers with developmental disabilities felt excluded or segregated. They hadn't realized that they often didn't join sports teams because they were not allowed to or they were inaccessible.

At the end of the conference, all of the youth signed a "Call to Action", where a commitment was made to bring back what was learned about inclusion to their local schools and communities. As one participant put it, "This forum inspired me to think about my responsibility to make everyone involved and be part of my community."

Not wanting to lose the momentum, Ontario's Community Inclusion Project developed a web-based forum called "re:Action 4 Inclusion" for participants to keep in touch, share strategies and successes, and to keep making commitments about achieving inclusion. At **www.reaction4inclusion.org**, past participants write about how they are changing their schools and communities to become more inclusive of people with developmental disabilities.

For the next three years, Ontario's Community Inclusion Project will be funding a youth leadership series to continue encouraging young people to be active in achieving inclusion within their schools and communities across the province.

- Linda White,
Community Inclusion Coordinator

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Canada's Community Inclusion Initiative

The National Community Inclusion Initiative (CII) is a partnership between the Canadian Association for Community Living, People First of Canada and provincial/territorial associations for Community Living, like Community Living Ontario.

The CII promotes the inclusion, full participation and citizenship of Canadians with developmental disabilities and their families. Its goals are to:

- Help communities include people with developmental disabilities in ways that promote their roles as full citizens.
- Help communities become more welcoming and supportive of people with developmental disabilities.
- Help communities become places where people in all their diversity belong.

The CII has made a real difference in the lives of thousands of people with developmental disabilities and their families throughout Canada. Most importantly, CII has made more people without disabilities aware of the importance of inclusion. It has reframed "community inclusion" from a disability issue to one of full citizenship, human rights and equal participation.

In June 2009, CII received funding from the Government of Canada to continue promoting inclusion for another three years.

- Don Gallant, National Director
of the Community Inclusion Initiative

Update on the Human Resource (HR) Strategy for Developmental Services

Committees of the HR Strategy for Developmental Services have been hard at work over the past few months. Here's an update on what they're doing to transform human resources practices in developmental services:

- The Agency-based Training Committee released a training survey in May. The survey will identify current training programs offered by agencies.
- The report on "core competencies" (or, necessary skills) for developmental services staff was completed in July. The Core Competencies Committee is developing a plan to make these skills part of everyone's job.
- The Marketing Committee finished its communication plan for the HR Strategy.

Inclusive Employment

Kelly Taylor: A Valued Member of the Team

Kelly Taylor

Kelly Taylor is employed at Cohen Highley LLP, a law firm in London, Ontario and has been with the firm in an administrative support role for 14 years. She was hired by the firm through an employment service program operated by Community Living London.

According to Joe Hoffer, a partner with the firm, Kelly's colleagues have come to appreciate her consistently positive attitude, willingness to learn and take initiative, and strong work ethic. "She is doing productive work and she knows it's appreciated," says Hoffer.

She's also had a positive impact on the firm's relationships with its clients. "When clients come in, they are greeted by Kelly," says Hoffer. "They comment on her attitude and feel a vicarious sense of pride to be associated with a business that employs people who have a disability."

- Community Living Ontario
Annual Report, 2007-2008

The Coffee Shed at the University of Toronto

The Common Ground Co-operative is a non-profit umbrella organization of catering and retail food outlets run by adults with developmental disabilities in Toronto. The Co-op supports and develops small businesses through fundraising, consulting and networking to create meaningful employment for people who may not have been able to work otherwise.

People with developmental disabilities manage the day-to-day operations at each business. They're considered business partners and receive their earnings strictly from their own business, not from the Co-op.

One of the businesses supported by the Co-op is the Coffee Shed at the University of Toronto (U of T). Here staff and students of the university come for organic, fair-trade coffee and yummy baked goods made by Lemon & Allspice Cookery (a business partnership also run by people with developmental disabilities).

Not only is the Coffee Shed a successful retail food business in Ontario's largest university, it's also a model of inclusion. Through retail counter sales and catering deliveries, the Coffee Shed's business partners with developmental disabilities interact with the community every day. They also develop relationships with their co-workers and the broader university population.

In late 2008, the Coffee Shed received a rating of 9/10 from U of T newspaper The Strand. Students based their ratings in part on the quality of food served and the friendly attitude of its workers. Notably, their rating was also based on the Coffee Shed's inclusive vibe, which they described as "a forward-thinking, positive atmosphere of inclusion and acceptance".

Here's what Rita Winkler has to say about working at the Coffee Shed:

"**My experiences with Common Ground and the Coffee Shed started as a co-op while I was in school. I trained with one of the partners at the Coffee Shed on my first day. My teacher from school came to the co-op and talked to my job coach. I gave him a tour around the place I was working. I felt happy and proud of myself.**

Now I am an apprentice at the Coffee Shed. I love being cashier. I love serving customers. I like making coffee and tea. I like to work with the partners and other apprentices. On some days we have partnership meetings and events. I love my job. Working is great."

- Rita Winkler

Inclusive Community Service

"Hello, Guider Ruth Anne!"

Wherever she goes, this is what Ruth Anne Stephenson hears. She has been a Girl Guide leader for the past three years. In that time, Ruth Anne has met a lot of people in her community, and all have come to know and appreciate her as a leader.

A few years ago, Ruth Anne told one of her support workers that she wanted to be a Girl Guide leader. This prompted a call to the Girl Guide's district leader, Teresa. Soon after, Teresa invited Ruth Anne to be a co-leader of her Guide group. This was the beginning of their friendship built on a shared desire to give back to the community.

Ruth Anne Stephenson

Ruth Anne has faced some challenges on her journey toward inclusion. One day, the bus provided for her first out-of-town meeting with Girl Guides of Canada was not accessible. Thanks to her group's inclusive outlook, however, they abandoned the bus and decided to ride with Ruth Anne in an accessible van.

Today, Ruth Anne and Teresa are still co-leading their Guide group. They have a relationship of mutual respect and work hard between meetings to make sure the girls in their group have interesting gatherings. Both expect the other to come to their meetings well prepared – and they always do.

Self-advocacy is also a very important part of Ruth Anne's role as a Girl Guide leader. Each December, she hosts a Christmas party for her Guide group, both to celebrate and to show her girls that she lives in a house just like theirs. She also starts off each Guide year with a presentation to the girls about her disability and the importance of inclusion. "We can only begin to appreciate each other's wonderful qualities if we are educated about different lifestyles," says Ruth Anne.

- From Kirby's Lane... A Well Travelled Path, published by Community Living Ontario, 2009

Inclusive Recreation

York Support Services Network's Inclusive Recreation Resource Service

York Support Services Network launched the Inclusive Recreation Resource Service (IRRS) in April 2006. IRRS staff work with the local recreation community to help people with a developmental disability participate in the recreational activity of their choosing. Staff do this by:

- Linking people with community agencies.
- Consulting with individuals.
- Advocating.
- Offering skill-building activities.
- Providing encouragement.

In just three years, the IRRS program has seen much success. In 2008, they worked with more than 40 York Region organizations to help nearly 100 adults participate in recreational activities that interested them. IRRS has proudly helped:

- Two people get volunteer positions at the City Playhouse in Vaughan.
- One person volunteer at a summer camp in Markham.
- Two people join an Aurora bowling league.
- The Town of Markham develop a Skill-Building Activities Club, which has attracted nine young adult members.
- The Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville to develop an Adapted Gentle Fitness Class.

Each year, IRRS supports more people and strengthens its partnerships with community groups. It looks forward to helping more people get the recreation they want and to helping community groups provide more options for inclusive recreation.

- York Support Services Network's Developmental Services Team

Calling All Authors: Tell us more about inclusion!

If you have a real life story about being included in your community, this is your opportunity to share it! Adults with developmental disabilities who live in Ontario are welcome to send us stories that we may feature in ministry publications. If we use your story, your name will appear in our publication. And we may contact you to see if you are interested in letting us produce a video about your story.

Here are the rules:

1. You must be a resident of Ontario, have a developmental disability, and be 18 years or older.
2. You can only submit an electronic copy of your inclusion story. We'll accept copies in .PDF, .doc and .docx formats. You can also paste your story directly into the body of an email and send it along.
3. Your inclusion story must be an original without any copyright claims. This means that it is your story, not a copy of someone else's.
4. You, the author, keep your copyright. But we will have the nonexclusive right to publish your story without extra permission from you.
5. If want to add a picture to your story, we must collect extra information from you (and anyone else in the picture). Please contact Maribeth Christensen at: **maribeth.christensen2@ontario.ca** or 416-325-4252 for help.

We want Ontario to hear more stories from you!

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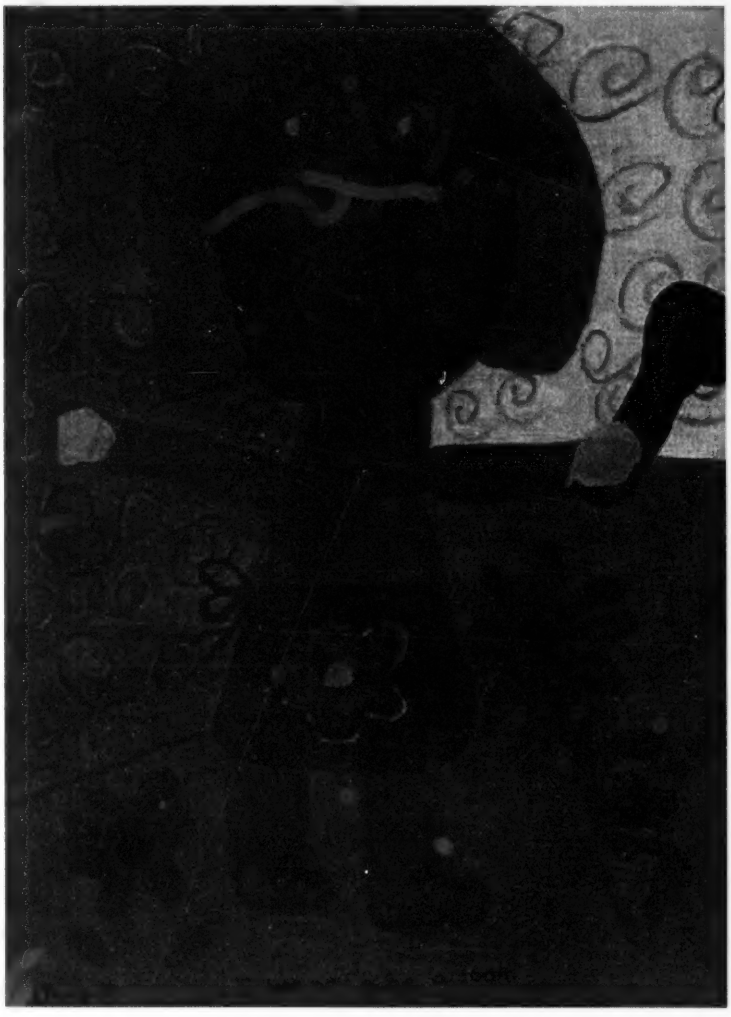

This is a painting by Marie McCann, which was submitted to Spotlight on Transformation's Call for Artists in February 2009. Marie loves to cook. She participated in an art literacy program in 2008. Encouraged to paint about what she loves most, Marie chose cooking and described her love this way:

"I want to be a cook because I like to eat different kinds of food. I am wearing an apron and a big green spoon. I love thinking about my friends."

Marie enjoys helping out in the Pathways Bakery and Café, as well as painting and being with her friends in the Connections day program. Marie's painting, I want to be a cook, graces the cover of the Pathways Bakery and Café recipe book.